

Ireland as conclusive in favour of this course. There it had been made a national question, and it would have to be treated on the same lines in this country.

Mr. Wedgwood moved that the bill be read a second time that day six months and ridiculed it as the first-fruits of Tory democracy, a bad bill rich in its badness. It opened with a new department: more jobbery, more fat salaries for cadets of landed families, a new branch of the Local Government Board, although that Board could not manage the business.

Mr. Dundas White seconded the amendment, and condemned the bill, which was supported by Mr. Sutton and by Mr. W. H. Forster. After several other speeches,

Mr. Burns defined the attitude of the Government to the measure. He said that the Local Government Board had done a great deal in the direction of housing reform, and he was very grateful to everybody who had spoken and to reformers generally for the steps that they were taking to give increased prominence to this social problem. But it was so generous to be philanthropic with other people's money and to ask for a dole of £500,000 to-day, to be followed up by one of £1,000,000 next year and £1,500,000 the year following. They were not justified in pulling up the Housing Act, which was only two years old, and had hardly set its roots in the ground, to see how far it had grown. It had been said that the Local Government Board had done nothing in the last six years with regard to housing loans and schemes, and great play had been made with what had been done in Ireland, but the £7,500,000 was spent there under totally different conditions. Local authorities in England and Wales, without a subsidy from rates or taxes and charity rents, had spent as much per annum by ratio. He deplored the lack of energy of local authorities, both urban and rural, but it was not true to say that nothing had been done with regard to rural housing. From 1890 to 1909, before the passing of the Act, only eight rural councils took action. In the last two years thirty-five had acted, and that was almost in the last fifteen or sixteen months, because they had not known what their power was. In fifteen months the rural district councils had issued 17,000 notices for the repair of houses; apart from repair work, there had been in the last three years 13,000 representations to the rural district councils, of which 9,000 were last year; for closing, demolition, and repair 20,000 separate actions had been taken in rural areas in the last two years. It was said, "It is true you have built more houses in the rural areas, but what is the good of that when you have closed 1,344?" That was not the fact. Closing orders were issued against 1,344, all of which, with the exception of 126, instead of being demolished, had been put into a condition of habitable repair. With regard to the two main principles of the bill, he ventured to predict that before five years had passed there would be strong resentment in all quarters of the House and the country at the power of the Imperial Parliament in relation to local authorities being interfered with and superseded by *ad hoc* Commissioners, who had neither the knowledge nor experience of the Department, and would be outside its authority. It had been stated that under the Liverpool improvement scheme 75 per cent. of the dispossessed people had been rehoused on the spot, and that the criminal statistics had fallen in consequence. The criminal element was in the 25 per cent. that had gone elsewhere. Dr. Hope, the Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool, and one of the finest officers in the kingdom, had in fifteen years enormously reduced the mortality from typhus, typhoid, phthisis, and other diseases; were hon. members going to supersede his splendid work by some gentleman from London who knew as much about Liverpool as a dog did about his parents? The only way in which the House could act was through the local authorities. The 25,000 local authorities in England and Wales were all increasingly suspicious of Commissioners. The proposed annual grant of £500,000 ought not to be set up on the motion of a private member. There were 1,250,000 men in the United Kingdom engaged in the building trade, and over £100,000,000 in wages or profits taken by masters and men. What was the good of half a million—less than one-half of 1 per cent.—on an industry that employed so much capital? Charity rents from rates or taxes were nothing more nor less than a bonus in aid of low wages, and would be used and exploited by unscrupulous employers of labour to that end. At the present

moment private landlords, co-partnership associations, and co-operative associations were extending their influence through urban areas into the rural districts. If they gave a blank cheque in favour of housing schemes they would discourage all this enterprise which was covering the whole kingdom. These bodies would wait until a grant came, and the result would be disastrous upon all aspects of the housing problem. In the rural districts the councils were building on economic lines. But under the Small Holdings Acquisition Act he found that in twelve years the London County Council sanctioned eighteen loans, that two borough councils sanctioned thirty-three loans, so that for fifty-two cases there was less than £10,000. In England and Wales during the same period there were 922 houses at a cost of £210,000, and one district—Ilford—had built 40 per cent. of the total number of houses while receiving about 45 per cent. of the money. Of the 119 men in Ilford who had redeemed their houses under the Act, 20 to 25 per cent. had acted as sellers again, because they had to quit the district in order to follow their work. The mobility of labour in this country was forgotten, but this bill was based on the permanency and not on the mobility of labour. In advising the House as to the course it should take, he showed that it was only by the aid of a responsible Minister that an amending bill to remove defects could be pushed forwards. This bill, then, could not get any further forward. There was another reason. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in deference to the views of all sections of the House, had instituted a Committee to revise the subventions from the Imperial Exchequer to the local authorities and to examine the question whether there should or should not be a subsidy for housing in rural or urban areas, and for water supply and drainage, the central authority making some contribution to the local authority. That was the way in which this question ought to be handled—namely, on the initiative of a responsible Minister. He viewed the bill as an indication on the part of the House of Commons of a desire for something more to be done in the direction of housing reform, and he construed the criticism of his department as being due to a desire to strengthen its power and authority. He would, therefore, ask the House to do no more than to give a second reading to the bill, keeping it, however, within its control.

After a short speech by Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. King rose to continue the debate, but the closure was granted, and the amendment to put off the second reading was negatived and the bill read a second time without a division. Mr. Booth, representing the opponents of the bill, moved that it be committed to a Committee of the whole House. This was defeated by a majority of 29, amid Opposition cheers, and the bill will go to a standing Committee.

**Public Health (Sewers and Drains) Bill.**—This bill proposes to amend the Public Health Acts with respects to sewers and drains. It was presented by Mr. Harmond-Banner, supported by Sir Thomas Roe, Sir Charles Nicholson, Mr. George Thorne, Sir Alfred Cripps, Sir Luke White, Lord Alexander Thynne, Mr. Hamar Greenwood, and Mr. Middlebrook, and put down for second reading at an early date.

**Dogs' Protection (No. 2) Bill.**—This is a second bill to prohibit experiments upon dogs. Presented by Sir Frederick Banbury, it is supported by Mr. George Greenwood and Mr. Field, and will be put down for an early second reading.

**Inebriates Bill.**—This is a Government bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to inebriates. Presented by Mr. Ellis Griffith, it is supported by Mr. Secretary McKenna, and will be brought on for second reading as soon as possible.

#### A CORRECTION.

By an unfortunate clerical error in proof a sentence was appended to the report of the question and answer in the House of Commons on anthrax, published in the JOURNAL of March 9th, p. 570, which did not belong to the subject. The sentence related to an answer to Mr. Lynch, who inquired whether the Home Secretary was in a position to make a statement as to the person or persons it was intended to appoint to make the investigations promised into the circumstances of William Ball at Pentonville Prison.